

DEDICATION

Dedicated in loving memory of

Moshe and Leah Berokowitz

My father- and mother-in-law;

loving parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.

They escaped from Europe at the start of the Second World War
came to the Land of Israel, where they were interned in Atlit.

After being freed, they met and raised a wonderful family.

May their memories be eternally blessed.

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Preface

This volume brings to a conclusion my translation and annotation of Avraham Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Book of Psalms. I offer thanks to the Holy One, Blessed Be He, for giving me life and sustaining me so that I was able to complete this work.

Ibn Ezra's commentaries to scripture are a major contribution to biblical exegesis. He is quoted by commentators such as Radak, Nachmanides, Abrahanel, Rabbi Levi ben Gershom, and a host of other exegetes, down to our time. Ibn Ezra's commentaries are printed in the standard rabbinic edition of Tanach, along with the commentaries of Rashi and Radak. One cannot consider oneself a true student of Jewish biblical exegesis without having studied Ibn Ezra's commentary on scripture.

Ibn Ezra once commented that when it comes to interpreting the prophets, "We at times grope walls as the blind do. One commentator offers one interpretation and another a different one." He could have been describing his own commentary.

Ibn Ezra is not always easy to comprehend. He is often unclear, and the reader has to work hard to understand his meaning. In addition, the reader must be knowledgeable in Hebrew grammar and acquainted with medieval philosophy, astronomy, and astrology to understand many of his notes on scripture.

Ibn Ezra admits as much. He thus comments on Ps. 19:1: "This is a very important psalm. [It reads: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork.] It deals with the heavenly apparatus. I will now briefly explain it. However, only one who has studied the science of the stars will understand my explanation."

He often alludes to secrets, and not all of his hints have been deciphered. For example, in his commentary on Genesis he alludes to the Aggada that the sun and moon were originally of the same size. The moon complained about

this. God then said to the moon, “Since you feel that you and the sun should not be the same size, your size shall be diminished.”

Ibn Ezra maintains that this Aggada should not be taken at face value, for it has a secret meaning. What is its secret meaning? The commentaries on his own commentary differ till this very day.

The book of Leviticus describes the Yom Kippur ritual. A scapegoat played a key role in the ritual of the day, for the sins of Israel were placed by the High Priest on the head of the scapegoat, which was then sent away to Azazel in the wilderness.

Ibn Ezra “explains” this ritual with the following comment: “If you are able to understand the secret that follows Azazel, then you will know its secret and the secret of its name, for it has comrades in scripture. I will reveal a bit of its secret in a hint: when you are thirty-three you will understand it.” Many have passed thirty-three since his time, but no one has figured out what Ibn Ezra was getting at.

I have tried to the utmost to understand Ibn Ezra’s commentary on Psalms and to convey his meaning, via translation and annotations, to the English-speaking reader. I reviewed this manuscript many times and hope that what follows is a faithful rendering of the material.

The work was written over a number of years. Volumes 1 and 2, covering psalms 1-72, appeared in 2012. Ideally, there should be consistency in transliteration and style between volumes 1 and 2 and the present volume 3. However, this is not always possible in a multi-volume work composed over a long period of time. While I have worked very hard in editing this volume, concentrating on accuracy and correct meaning, I hope that the reader will forgive any typos or inconsistencies in spelling between volumes 1-2 and volume 3.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Rick Strassman of New Mexico, a psychiatrist and student of Jewish thought who has written a number of works on psychiatry and religion, for his help in editing this work. Dr. Strassman read the manuscript very carefully and made many useful comments and corrections.

I also want to thank those who have written to me and encouraged me to continue working on this translation and annotation.

I especially want to thank Sharona Vedol and Kira Nemirovsky of Academic Studies Press for their efforts and patience in reading and editing

this work. they worked very hard in correcting the manuscript and made many valuable suggestions. I truly appreciate their work and efforts. I know that it wasn't easy.

Additionally, I am most grateful to Dr. Alan Kadish, president and CEO of Touro College; Dr. Michael Shmidman, dean of the Touro College Graduate School of Jewish Studies; Dr. Simcha Fishbane; and the entire staff of Touro College Press for their help in publishing this work.

When one concludes a tractate of the Talmud, it is traditional to declare that one is not finished with the tractate but will return to study the very tractate now completed. The student of the Talmud knows that he will gain new insights each time he reviews the text that he has studied. The same can be said of Ibn Ezra's work: each rereading offers new insights into his interpretation of scripture.

I conclude this introduction by saying, as is customary upon finishing a study of a particular Jewish text: *Hadran Alakh Pirush Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra al Sefer Tehilim*.

Rabbi Dr. H. Norman Strickman

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BOOK 3

Chapter 73

1. A PSALM OF ASAPH. SURELY GOD IS GOOD TO ISRAEL. EVEN TO SUCH AS ARE PURE OF HEART.

SURELY GOD IS GOOD TO ISRAEL. All people who do not truly comprehend the works of God complain.¹ It is for this reason that the psalmist opens the psalm with *akh tov le-yisrael* (surely God is good to Israel),² for the meaning of *akh tov le-yisrael* (surely God is good to Israel) is, “God is good only to Israel but not to the nations of the world who do not know Him.”

EVEN TO SUCH AS ARE PURE OF HEART. Not to all of Israel.³

This psalm is similar in meaning to the psalm reading, “Hear this, all ye peoples” (Ps. 49:2).⁴ The future reward of the righteous is clearly stated in this psalm.⁵

2. BUT AS FOR ME, MY FEET WERE ALMOST GONE; MY STEPS HAD WELL NIGH SLIPPED.

BUT AS FOR ME. It is possible that Asaph speaks on behalf of himself. On the other hand, Asaph might be speaking on behalf of every intelligent person.

“My feet were almost gone” (*natuy*) refers to turning aside from the righteous ways.⁶ The righteous ways are the ways of God. Compare this to

1 People complain that the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper.

2 Ultimately, Israel will be rewarded and the wicked punished.

3 The wicked of Israel will ultimately be punished for their sins. It is worthy of note that Radak believes “pure of heart” refers to people of all nations who are pure of heart.

4 According to I.E., Ps. 49 teaches that the righteous will be rewarded in the world to come. Our psalm expresses the same idea. See I.E. on verses 24–28 of our psalm.

5 The world to come. See I.E. on verse 24.

6 I.E. renders *natuy* as “turned aside.”

“My foot hath kept fast to His steps” (Job 23:11). It is the foot that does the walking. The psalmist therefore compares the faith of the heart,⁷ to which a person should habituate himself, to walking.

All the root letters are present in the word *natuy* (gone).⁸ Compare this to *chasayu* (trusted)⁹ in “The rock in whom they trusted” (Deut. 32:37).

It would have been fitting¹⁰ to render the word *ke-ayin* as “well-nigh” and the word *shuppekhu* as “slipped,” for the word *ashurai* (my steps) is similar to *raglai* (my feet); *ke-ayin* (well-nigh) is parallel to *ki-me’at* (almost), and our verse, as is often the case in poetry, repeats itself.¹¹

However, since we find that the word *ayin* in scripture always means “nothing” and “that which does not exist,”¹² [we must say that the word *shuppekhu* is to be rendered “poured” and that] the psalmist speaks metaphorically when he says that his steps are “poured as water.”¹³ Compare this to “I am poured out as water” (Ps. 22:15). Nothing is left in the vessel after the water has been poured from it. Hence the psalmist says that his feet were “poured out” and he does not have them to walk with.

7 I.E.’s rendition of *pure of heart*.

8 Literally, “The word *natuy* (gone) is complete.” *Natuy* comes from the root *nun, tet, heh*. In such cases the *heh* is usually dropped and the word written *natu*. However, in the form *natuy* all root letters are “present,” for the *yod* in *natuy* takes the place of the *heh*.

9 The word *chasayu* comes from the root *chet, samekh, heh*. In such cases the word is usually written *chasu*. In other words, the *heh* is dropped. However, in the form *chasayu* all root letters are “present,” for the *yod* in *chasayu* takes the place of the *heh*.

10 Literally, “behold, it would have been fitting.”

11 Our verse reads *va-ani ki-me’at natuy raglai, ke-ayin shuppekhu ashurai* (But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped). The second part of the verse repeats the first part: *ke-ayin* (well-nigh) is parallel to *ki-me’at* (almost); *shuppekhu* (slipped) is parallel to *natuy* (gone); and *raglai* (my feet) is parallel to *ashurai* (my steps). Thus, *prima facie* *ke-ayin* should be rendered as “almost” (well-nigh) and *shuppekhu* as “slipped,” for *shuppekhu* is parallel to *natuy*.

12 Hence *ke-ayin shuppekhu ashurai* (“my steps had well-nigh slipped”) is to be rendered as, “my steps were poured out as nothing.”

13 I.E. explains “my steps were poured out as nothing” as meaning, “my steps were poured out like water from a vessel, with nothing remaining.” This interpretation reads our verse as follows: “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps were poured out [like water from a vessel], [they were] as nothing.”

3. FOR I WAS ENVIOUS AT THE ARROGANT, WHEN I SAW THE PEACE OF THE WICKED.

FOR I WAS ENVIOUS AT THE ARROGANT. The psalmist's steps almost slipped because¹⁴ he was jealous of the arrogant. *Hollelim* (arrogant) is a *po'el*.¹⁵ It follows the paradigm of *sovevim* (go about) in "that go about the city" (Song of Sol. 5:7). *Hollelim* (arrogant) is related to *va-yithollel* (and feigned himself mad) (1 Sam. 21:14).¹⁶

4. FOR THERE ARE NO PANGS AT THEIR DEATH AND THEIR BODY IS SOUND.

FOR THERE ARE NO PANGS AT THEIR DEATH. *Chartzubbot* (pangs) comes from a four-letter root.¹⁷ The book of Isaiah reads, "To open¹⁸ (*patte'ach*) the fetters (*chartzubbot*) of wickedness" (Is. 58:6). *Patte'ach* [thus] has the meaning of "open." This being the case, then *chartzubbot* means "a tied-up bundle."¹⁹ The meaning of *ki ein chartzubbot le-motam* (for there are no pangs at their death)²⁰ would then be, "It would be fit for them to be tied to their yoke²¹ so that they will die quickly."²²

Rabbi Moses says that the meaning of *ki ein chartzubbot le-motam u-vari ulam* (there are no pangs at their death and their body is sound) is, "They suffer no pangs until their death."²³ On the contrary, they are healthy.²⁴ *U-vari ulam* is to be interpreted as, "But (*ulam*) each one of them is

14 Literally, "The reason for the aforementioned."

15 A *kal* present form.

16 I.E. renders our clause, "For I was envious at those who act foolishly"—i.e. the sinners.

17 Its root is *chet, resh, tzadi, bet*.

18 Translated according to I.E.

19 One opens something which is tied up.

20 Literally, "Its meaning is."

21 Reading *ulam*.—*Ha-Keter*. According to I.E., our verse reads, "There are no bonds to their death"; that is, they are not bound to a yoke so that they die. Filwarg reads *avlam* (their sin). According to Filwarg, I.E. reads our verse as follows: "They are not bound to their sins, so that they soon die." J. Filwarg, *Bene Reshef* [Supercommentary on Ibn Ezra's Commentaries on Scripture] (Piotrkow: 1900). Henceforth this supercommentary will be referred to as "Filwarg."

22 Literally, "So that it quickly puts them to death." Being tied to the yoke (doing hard labor) would result in their premature death.

23 They suffer no pangs as long as they live.

24 Rabbi Moshe renders *ulam* (body) as "but."

healthy.”²⁵ However, this is incorrect, for a word like *ulam*, which is a particle,²⁶ does not come at the end of a sentence. *Ulam*²⁷ is similar to *la-khen* (therefore), *akhen* (surely), *rak* (only), *akh* (but), *bilti* (without), *zulati* (except), *lema’an* (so that), and *ba’avur* (because of). We do not find such usage [of a particle of this nature at the end of a sentence] in all of scripture.²⁸

Others say that a *kaf* is missing from the word *ulam*. The meaning of *u-vari ulam* is, “each one of them is as strong as an entrance hall (*ke-ulam*).”

Others say that *ulam* is missing a *bet*. They believe that the meaning of *u-vari ve-ulam*²⁹ is, “each one is healthy in his porch.” The reason why the psalmist mentions a porch is because the wicked dwell in very expensive houses, which have porches. The porch of the house of God, which is mentioned in the book of Chronicles, is an example.³⁰

On the other hand, the porch might be mentioned because it is healthy for a person to dwell in a porch because of its air, for its top is covered, and it is exposed [to the air on its sides].

However, in my opinion our verse should be interpreted as follows: the psalmist first says, “I see that the wicked are at peace during their lifetime” (verse 3). He then goes on to say that even when they die they do so without being struck or being ill. They expire without suffering plagues and pain. It is as if their souls are not connected to their bodies.³¹

The word *ulam* follows the paradigm of *tuvam* (their goodness). The word *ulam* means “their strength.” The reference is to the power of nature, which preserves the body. *Ulam* is related to the word *el* (power) in “it is in the power of my hand” (Gen. 31:29).

The meaning of our verse is that when the wicked die they feel no pain, and when they are alive their natural vitality is strong and healthy.

25 *Bari* (healthy) is in the singular. However, the first part of the verse is in the plural. Hence this interpretation.

26 In Hebrew, *millat ha-ta’am*.

27 With the meaning of “but” or “however.”

28 A usage in which *ulam* (but), *la-khen* (therefore), *akhen* (surely), *rak* (only), *akh* (but), *bilti* (without), *zulati* (except), *lema’an* (so that), and *ba’avur* (because of) are placed at the end of a clause.

29 The meaning of *u-vari ve-ulam*.

30 2 Chron. 29:7.

31 They die peacefully. Their souls do not feel the pangs of death which the body endures.

5. IN THE TROUBLE OF MAN THEY ARE NOT; NEITHER ARE THEY PLAGUED LIKE MEN.

IN THE TROUBLE OF MAN THEY ARE NOT. For they are wealthy.
NEITHER ARE THEY PLAGUED LIKE MEN. Scripture repeats itself.³²
Or perhaps “Neither are they plagued like men” means that when a plague comes into the air which surrounds everyone, the wicked escape the plague. However, the righteous do not.³³

6. THEREFORE PRIDE IS AS A CHAIN ABOUT THEIR NECK; VIOLENCE COVERETH THEM AS A GARMENT.

THEREFORE ... AS A CHAIN ABOUT THEIR NECK. The word *anakatmo* (a chain about their neck) is related to the word *anakim* (chains) in “And chains about thy neck” (Prov. 1:9). *Anak* refers to a circlet of gold.³⁴ *Ya’ataf* (garment) is related to the word *ha-ma’atafot* (the mantelets) (Is. 3:22).

VIOLENCE COVERETH THEM AS A GARMENT.³⁵ *Shith* (garment) is similar to *shith* (the manner of) in *With the manner*³⁶ of a harlot (Prov. 7:10). It means, “in the manner of.”³⁷

Some say that *ya’ataf* (covereth) is similar to *ya’atof* (when he envelops himself) in, “A prayer of the afflicted, when he envelops himself (*ya’atof*)” (Ps. 102:1).³⁸ Furthermore,³⁹ the meaning of *shith* is “a corner.” The import of *ya’ataf shith chamas lamo* (violence covereth them as a garment) is that violence envelops the wicked on all corners. It is as if they were in its power.

32 The second half of the verse repeats the first half. “Neither are they plagued like men” means the same as “In the trouble of man they are not.”

33 According to this interpretation, scripture does not repeat itself, for the second half of the verse adds a new thought.

34 In Hebrew, *Zer zahav*. See Ex. 25:24.

35 In Hebrew, *ya’ataf shith chamas lamo*.

36 Translated according to I.E.

37 According to this interpretation *ya’ataf shith chamas lamo* means, “The manner of a garment is violence to them, that is, they wear violence as a garment.

38 Translated according to I.E.

39 They furthermore say.

7. THEIR EYES STAND FORTH FROM FATNESS; THEY ARE GONE BEYOND THE IMAGINATIONS OF THEIR HEART.

THEIR EYES STAND FORTH⁴⁰ [FROM FATNESS.⁴¹] Rabbi Moses says that *enemo* (their eyes) is similar to the word *en* (appearance) in “as the appearance of bedellium” (Num. 11:7).⁴² The meaning of *yatza me-chelev enemo* (their eyes stand forth from fatness) is, “He goes out [in public] (*yatza*), and because of his fatness (*me-chelev*) appears good-looking (*enemo*) to those who see him.”

There are those who say [that the meaning of *yatza me-chelev enemo* (their eyes stand forth from fatness) is] that they are so fat that their eyes appear to have gone out. In this case *enemo* (their eyes) is similar to *enayim* (eyes) in “Eyes have they, but they see not” (Ps. 115:5).⁴³

According to Rabbi Moses, *maskiyyot* (imaginations) means “thoughts,” for the word *sekhvi* (Job 38:36)⁴⁴ alludes to the heart. *Maskiyyot* is a word with two meanings that are identical:⁴⁵ it means “to see,” as in the Aramaic rendition of *yitzeḥ Adonai* (the Lord watches) (Gen. 31:49),⁴⁶ and *maskiyyot* [also] refers to what are, as it were, sights [of the heart]. Compare this with “my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge” (Eccl. 1:16). According to this interpretation, *maskiyyot* means “imagery” (*sekhivot*), as in “delightful imagery” (Is. 2:16).⁴⁷

On the other hand, the word *maskiyyot* might be similar in meaning to the word *maskit* (figured) as in *even maskit* (figured stone) (Lev. 26:1). The meaning of *even maskit* is a figured stone.⁴⁸ The figures spoken of in our verse are thoughts.

40 *Yatza*. Literally, *goes out*.

41 Our clause literally reads, *It goes out from fat his eyes*.

42 According to this interpretation, our clause literally reads, “goes out from fat his appearance.”

43 According to this interpretation, our clause literally reads, “goes out from fat his eyes.”

44 Which comes from the same root as *maskiyyot*.

45 Literally, “to one there are two meanings that are like one.” *Maskiyyot* refers to seeing with the eyes or “seeing” with the heart.

46 Onkelos renders *yitzeḥ Adonai* as *yisekh memrah da-Adonai*—“The word of God will watch.” Thus Onkelos renders *yitzeḥ* as “will see” or “will watch.”

47 This refers to what the heart sees.

48 According to this interpretation, our clause reads, “The figures (imaginations) of their hearts.”

The meaning of *avru* (gone beyond) is *she-avru* (that have gone beyond).⁴⁹ The meaning of *They are gone beyond the imaginations of their heart* is, “They think thoughts that people should not think.”

8. THEY SCOFF, AND IN WICKEDNESS UTTER OPPRESSION; THEY SPEAK AS IF THERE WERE NONE ON HIGH.

THEY SCOFF. The word *yamiku* (they scoff) is related to the word *hamek* (consume away) in *hamek be-saro* (*Their flesh shall consume away* [Zech. 14:12]). *Yamiku* is transitive. The object is missing.⁵⁰ They, as it were, consume the righteous with their words.

AND IN WICKEDNESS UTTER OPPRESSION. This means, and they utter wicked words; [they speak] of the oppression and violence which they have done. They do not fear God.

THEY SPEAK AS IF THERE WERE NONE ON HIGH. The meaning *mi-marom yedabberu* (they speak as if there were none on high)⁵¹ is, “they speak so because no one is above them.”

9. THEY HAVE SET THEIR MOUTH AGAINST THE HEAVENS, AND THEIR TONGUE WALKETH THROUGH THE EARTH.

THEY HAVE SET THEIR MOUTH AGAINST THE HEAVENS.⁵² The *tav* of *shattu* (they have set) has a *dagesh* in it because it comes from a double root.⁵³ They think that the words of their mouth are, as it were, in heaven;⁵⁴ that is, their words are decrees which cannot be altered.⁵⁵ Now the one who speaks thus⁵⁶ is upon the earth. This is the meaning of “and their tongue walketh through the earth.”

⁴⁹ In other words, *avru* (gone beyond) should be interpreted as if it were written *she-avru*.

⁵⁰ The object of *yamiku*. The missing word is *shelemim* (the righteous, the whole-hearted). According to I.E., the opening of our verse is *yamiku shelemim* (they consume the righteous).

⁵¹ Literally, *they speak from on high*. Hence this interpretation.

⁵² In Hebrew, *va-shamayim*—literally, *in the heavens*. Hence I.E.’s comment.

⁵³ Its root is *shin, tav, tav*. However, the word *shattu* has only one *tav*. Hence I.E.’s comment.

⁵⁴ See note 52.

⁵⁵ See note 52.

⁵⁶ The one who thinks that the words of his mouth are in heaven.

It appears to me that *They have set their mouth against the heavens* means that they speak against God and His angels.⁵⁷

[THEIR TONGUE WALKETH THROUGH THE EARTH.] This means that their tongues are like the tongues of spies who walk about the earth to spread gossip regarding the stains, dirt, and imperfections that are found in the righteous. The meaning of *u-leshonam tihalah* (their tongue walketh)⁵⁸ is that their tongues, as it were,⁵⁹ walk to hear evil gossip.

10. THEREFORE HIS PEOPLE RETURN HITHER, AND WATERS OF FULLNESS ARE DRAINED OUT BY THEM.

THEREFORE. Rabbi Moses says that *halom* (hither) is an adjective.⁶⁰ It is connected to the word *ve-hal'mah* (she smote) in, “and she smote Sisera” (Judg. 5:26).⁶¹ *Halom* is a variant of *halum* (struck), which is vocalized with a *kamatz* beneath the *heh*, and is followed by a *vav* vocalized with a *shuruk*. It is similar⁶² to *mukkeh* (smitten) and *nagu'a* (plagued).

AND WATERS OF FULLNESS. The word “cup” is missing.⁶³

ARE DRAINED OUT. *Yimmatzu* (are drained out) is related to the word *u-matzit* (and drain it) (Ezek. 23:34). *Yimmatzu* is penultimately accented⁶⁴ because the word *lamo* (them) is accented on the first letter. This is the rule of the Hebrew language. Compare this to *asah li*⁶⁵ (hath gotten me) in “hath gotten me this great wealth” (Deut. 8:17).

The *mem*⁶⁶ of *lamo* (by them) refers to those mentioned at the opening of the psalm; namely, the pure of heart. However, in reality *lamo* refers to

57 See note 53. This interpretation renders *va-shamayim* as “against the heavens.”

58 Literally, The meaning of *tihalah* (walketh).

59 *Their tongue walketh* is not to be taken literally.

60 Meaning beaten.

61 Rabbi Moses renders our verse as “*Therefore His people return beaten*”; that is, the people are thunderstruck by the success of the wicked.

62 In vocalization.

63 *Mei male* (waters of fullness) should be read as if it was written *mei melo kos* (a cupful of water), the latter referring to a cupful of bitter water (Radak).

64 It is usually ultimately accented. Hence I.E.’s comment.

65 *Asah*, which is usually ultimately accented, is here penultimately accented because the word *li* which follows is accented on the first letter.

66 Which is a pronominal suffix meaning *them*.

ammo (His people),⁶⁷ for the word *lamo* is found in the singular and in the plural.⁶⁸

According to my opinion, the word *halom* means “hither.” Compare this to *halom* (hither) in *Is there yet a man come hither* (1 Sam. 10:22). The meaning of *yashiv ammo halom* (His people return hither) is that His people return [hither]⁶⁹ because of what they see. On the other hand, the word *yashuv* (return) might be connected to the word *shovev* (unruly).⁷⁰ It is also possible that the meaning of *yashuv ammo* (His people return hither) is that the people turn this⁷¹ over in their minds,⁷² but they do not know the reason for this.⁷³

11. AND THEY SAY: “HOW DOTH GOD KNOW? AND IS THERE KNOWLEDGE IN THE MOST HIGH?”

AND THEY SAY. Some say that the reference is to the wicked. However, in my opinion *And they say* refers to those who are with God. *Behold, such are the wicked* (verse 12) is proof of this.⁷⁴

12. BEHOLD, SUCH ARE THE WICKED; AND THEY THAT ARE ALWAYS AT EASE INCREASE RICHES.

BEHOLD. The meaning of this is that the righteous know with certainty⁷⁵ that there is a God who is exalted beyond the knowledge of man. God is wise of heart. He knows the categories, which are permanent.⁷⁶ However, the parts⁷⁷ are constantly changing. God does not know them because they are not everlasting.⁷⁸ The righteous⁷⁹ are grasped by doubt because they see

⁶⁷ Mentioned in the first part of the verse.

⁶⁸ In our verse it is in the singular and refers to *ammo* (His people).

⁶⁹ To the side of wickedness. When the pious see the success of the wicked they join them.

⁷⁰ In this case, our verse reads, “Therefore his people become unruly hither.”

⁷¹ The success of the wicked.

⁷² Literally, “return this to their hearts.” Compare this to *zot ashiv el libbi* (Lam. 3:21).

⁷³ Why the evil succeed.

⁷⁴ Verse 12 continues the trend of thought of verse 11. Verse 12 deals with what the righteous say, for the wicked would not say “*Behold, such are the wicked.*” Now verse 12 continues the thought of verse 11. It, as we have seen, deals with what the righteous say. So, too, does our verse.

⁷⁵ Literally, “with a certain knowledge.”

⁷⁶ See I.E. on Ps. 1:6 and the notes thereto.

⁷⁷ That make up the whole.

⁷⁸ See I.E. on Ps. 1:6 and the notes thereto.

⁷⁹ Literally, “they.”

that the wicked are always physically at peace and have great wealth.⁸⁰ The word *chayil* (riches)⁸¹ is similar in meaning to *chayil* (wealth) in “hath gotten me this wealth” (Deut. 8:17).

13. SURELY IN VAIN HAVE I CLEANSED MY HEART, AND WASHED MY HANDS IN INNOCENCE.

SURELY. These are words of the intelligent. The meaning of *I cleansed my heart* is that my thoughts are true thoughts and I have a pure faith in the Creator. Man was created for this purpose; that is, he was created so that his soul [would] be pure during his life and that it [would] shine as the stars.⁸²

MY HANDS IN INNOCENCE. The meaning of this is that I⁸³ did not do anything which was unfit, anything that was foul and filthy. The psalmist mentions “hands,” for most of the deeds are done by the hands.

14. FOR ALL THE DAY HAVE I BEEN PLAGUED, AND MY CHASTISEMENT CAME EVERY MORNING.

HAVE I BEEN PLAGUED. By the wicked. The *yod* in *ve-tokhachti* (and my chastisement) is the sign of the object,⁸⁴ for the wicked chastise the psalmist. This *yod* is the reverse of the *yod* in *ve-tokhachti* (and ... none of my reproof)⁸⁵ in, “*And would [have] none of my reproof*” (Prov. 1:25),⁸⁶ which indicates the subject.

However, in my opinion the psalmist is plagued by headaches, which he suffers in his efforts to overcome his inclination. *Ve-tokhachti* (and my chastisement) means, “my chastisement of myself.”⁸⁷

80 They think that since God does not know the parts of the whole that are in flux, He does not know what the wicked are doing. Hence the wicked are at ease. See I.E. on Ps. 1:6 and the notes thereto.

81 The word *chayil* can also mean strength or valor. Hence I.E.’s comment.

82 After death.

83 Literally, “he.”

84 It does not indicate possession. *My chastisement* refers to the chastisement which befalls the psalmist. It does not mean the chastisement which the psalmist administers.

85 Which indicates possession.

86 *My reproof* means “the reproof which I offer.”

87 In this case the *yod* in *ve-tokhachti* is a sign of the possessive.

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